

# ASTHMA

Arizona Department of Corrections  
Health Services Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program  
HEP 1005 - Revised 01/06

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that can be life threatening if you do not take care of it. Breathing problems known as attacks or episodes occur to people of all ages who have asthma. During an asthma attack your lungs go through the following changes.

- Cells in your air tubes make more mucous than normal and the mucous is very thick and sticky. It tends to clog up the air tubes.
- The air tubes tend to swell, just as skin swells when you get a scrape.
- The muscles in your air tubes tighten.

These changes cause the air tubes in the lungs to narrow, making it hard to breathe. The attacks may start suddenly, or may take a long time (days) to develop. An asthma attack may be mild, moderate or severe.

## **SIGNS & SYMPTOMS of MILD / MODERATE ATTACK**

- Coughing or spitting up mucous
- Feeling of restlessness
- Wheezing or whistling sound made when you breathe in or out

## **SIGNS & SYMPTOMS of SEVERE ATTACK**

- Have trouble talking
- Your neck muscles become tight as you breathe.
- Your lips and fingernails turn grayish or bluish in color.
- The skin around the ribs of your chest might be sucked in

## **MAIN TREATMENTS for ASTHMA**

- Avoid the condition that triggers your asthma.
- Do not smoke.
- Bronchodilators: Open airway tubes in your lungs making it easier to breathe.
- Anti-Inflammatory medications: Prevents asthma attacks from starting.

These medications come in many brand names and in different forms, including: *Inhalers, Pills, Shots, Powders, and Liquids.*

Once a medication is prescribed, it is important that you take it exactly as ordered to control your asthma. Abuse or over use of these medications can hurt or even kill you.

## **TELL YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER**

If you experience any of the following things:

- Trouble breathing at night keeps you awake disrupting your sleep
- Trouble performing normal activities
- Taking more asthma medicine than was ordered

## **PREVENTING ASTHMA ATTACKS**

If you can determine what causes or triggers the attacks to start, you maybe able to prevent the attacks by staying away from those triggers if possible.

## **COMMON TRIGGERS of ASTHMA**

- Allergic reactions to cigarette smoke, pollen, feathers, mold, animals, some foods, and house dust.
- Infections such as the common cold or the flu.
- Emotional stress and excitement.
- Vigorous exercise.
- Cold air.
- Dust and vapors given off by plastic, grains, metals, or wood.
- Air pollution such as cigarette smoke and auto exhaust.
- Household products such as paints, cleaners or sprays.
- Medications such as aspirin or heart medicine.

Asthma is a serious lung disorder. It can reduce the amount of oxygen you get when you breathe. Healthy

cells must have oxygen, it helps them function properly. To keep the cells in your body healthy, it is important to control your asthma. Remember, without

oxygen your body cells can NOT survive. To increase your chance of survival during an asthma attack, take your medication, seek prompt medical attention, and increase your knowledge of the disease process.

If you have further questions regarding asthma, direct them to a Health Care Professional at your next Health Care visit.

